



Nazli Nomanbhoy and Olive



Olive moved in with me in the spring of 2014. A stray in Kansas City, she found her way to the German Shepherd rescue in Fort Morgan. Although more Beagle and Hound than German Shepherd, it was a happy accident for me that she found her way there. We connected on their website and it was love at first sight. She became my constant companion.

My cat from the past seventeen years had passed away a few months before Olive moved in. A brand new experience for me. Far from the subtle displays of love from my cat, Olive held nothing back. Her tail wagging like a metronome set at presto, her body softening every time she saw me. What a huge, loving presence. I quickly learnt that Olive absolutely loves people.

For much of my life, I had read stories and articles about therapy animals, especially therapy dogs and the impact they made on people's lives. Olive had already made such a large impact on my own life that I thought therapy work would be a good fit for her. As a long-time volunteer at Denver Hospice, I learnt from their volunteer coordinator that I could become a registered therapy team through Denver Pet Partners.

So, our journey began. I was fortunate to have Marla Yetka as my mentor. She guided me through the evaluation process including training resources. Olive is my first dog. Everything was new, including training. We trained and practiced hard and became a registered therapy team in June 2015. It was one of the biggest accomplishments in my life! In fact, I felt so inspired by everyone in this organization and the work that they do with their pet partners that I joined the University of Denver's certificate program in Animals and Human Health and am in the process of completing it.

We started volunteering at Denver Hospice weekly soon after we passed our test. I was amazed at how easily Olive connected with the patients and their families. I always follow Olive's lead. There are some rooms she will not enter and others she enters very happily.

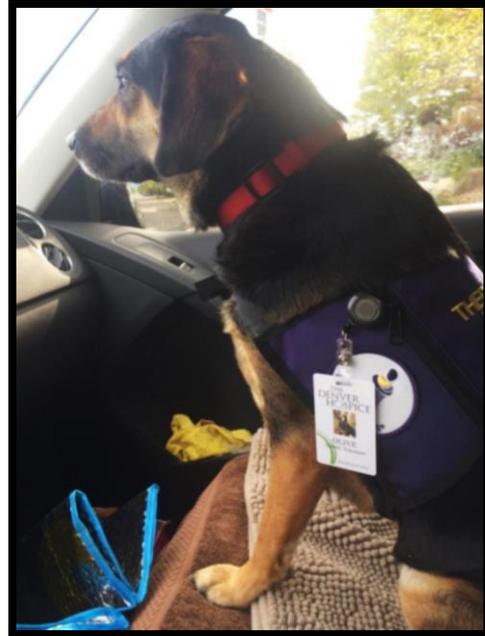
DPP Team of the Month (March 2017)

DENVER PET PARTNERS



She puts her paws on patient's beds, sometimes even sits with them setting of their bed alarms. Of course all with the patient's or their families' permission. She gently nudges the patient's hands with her nose and gives them kisses on their lips. Sometimes, the patients share stories about their lives with Olive, tears running down their cheek.

Then, of course, there is the nurse's station. The nurses and staff have come to know Olive and have become attached to her. Some of them stash treats for her in their filing cabinets, and all seem happy and relieved when she comes to give them some love and reprieve from their busy schedules. And then there is the popcorn machine. Yep, Olive's favorite and my nightmare!



Olive and I volunteered with the Bridge project for about 6 months where we tutored a student at Metro State in math. A different experience from hospice. Many of the children were afraid of dogs. There was an incident when a child was almost hit by a car while running away from a dog. One of our roles was to help the children feel comfortable and safe around Olive. We would give the children a lot of space, wave and sometimes perform tricks. Finally, the children's curiosity would spur them to ask me - "Can I pet your dog?".

We have also volunteered at a number of de-stress events as well as the United Airlines Paws event, all unique and special.

In addition to volunteering weekly at Denver Hospice, Olive and I volunteer weekly at Mount Saint Vincent where we participate in their R.E.A.D. program. Each week, Olive shares a large bean bag with one or two children, and gives them kisses while they read stories to her. To encourage the children to read, we come up with a bit of fun, like giving Olive treats after reading a page or two, going for a short walk, and even teaching her tricks. One child successful taught Olive to kiss her on command! We often read stories about dogs. The children enjoy Krypto the Superdog (Superman's side-kick) and Max (the dog) Goes to the Moon. Max looks just like Olive. Our two reading companions said they were going to write a new story this week - Olive Goes to the Moon. It sounds exciting. I look forward to joining Olive on her adventure to the moon and who knows where next!

DPP Team of the Month (March 2017)

